



# **Disarmament & International Security Committee**

## **Letter from the Executive Board**

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the Executive Board, it gives us great pleasure to welcome you to the DISEC committee at PremiaMUN 2023. We are excited to have such a talented and diverse group of delegates joining us for this year's conference.

It is firstly imperative that every delegate thoroughly comprehends the content of this background guide. Our main goal with this guide is to ensure each delegate is accustomed to each aspect of this agenda and can use this as a reference for further research. This background guide is not meant to be your only form of research, and it is thereby expected that every delegate conducts their own research before the start of this conference. The sources used in creating this guide will be linked below and can be used as references.

Furthermore, it is important to note that during committee sessions, delegates are not permitted to cite the Background Guide as a source for their statements. If you wish to use any information from the guide, we expect you to find the primary source from which the specific statements were derived. While it is acceptable to incorporate research from the Background Guide, we strongly encourage delegates to base the majority of their research and speeches on their own independent research.

Finally, if at any time you find yourselves with questions regarding the agenda or background guide or simply MUN in general, please do not hesitate to contact any one of us. Our email IDs will be listed at the bottom of this page, and we will be happy to help with anything!

We are eagerly awaiting the heated debates and discussions that DISEC is known for. We promise this conference platform for intellectual growth, and we are confident that each of you will contribute to its success!

Feel free to contact us via mail

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## **Overview of the UN General Assembly**

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is the main policy-making organ of the United Nations. It requires all 193 member nations to come together once a year to discuss matters relating to the UN charter.

- The General Assembly holds annual sessions lasting around three months, with the potential for emergency sessions based on necessity and a simple majority vote from the GA, a simple majority vote, or seven votes from the Security Council.
- Its mandate allows for discussions on any matters within the scope of the UN Charter, but it lacks the power to enforce actions on sovereign states.
- The General Assembly provides recommendations and performs various functions such as the election of judges to the International Court of Justice and the appointment of the Secretary-General as well as electing the non-permanent members of the UNSC and various other UN organs while also approving the UN budget.
- Most decisions require a simple majority vote but specific decisions, such as the appointment of a new member to the GA, require a two-thirds majority.
- The UNGA can only offer recommendations to the UNSC and cannot force any member state to take action.

There are 6 key committees under the UNGA, these include:

- Disarmament and International Security (DISEC)
- Economic and Financial (ECOFIN)
- Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural (SOCHUM)
- Special, Political, and Decolonization (SPECPOL)
- Administrative and Budgetary
- Legal

## DISEC

The first committee of the United Nations General Assembly is the Disarmament and International Security Committee, also known as C1 or DISEC. It revolves around the issues of disarmament, threats to peace & international security, and various global challenges while actively seeking out solutions to these issues.

DISEC's mandate can be classified into 7 thematic areas:

- Nuclear weapons
- Other weapons of mass destruction
- Outer space (disarmament aspects)
- Conventional weapons
- Regional disarmament and security
- Other disarmament measures and international security
- Disarmament machinery

DISEC can offer recommendations on all of the above-mentioned areas. These resolutions are meant to:

- Reflect the views of member states
- Provide policy recommendations
- Assign mandates to the UN Secretariat and the subsidiary bodies of the UNGA
- Decide on the UN budget

Any subsidiary bodies established through these resolutions will report alongside the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the Disarmament Commission (DC) to the United Nations General Assembly First Committee.

## About the Agenda

### *Defining non-state actors:*

Non-state actors are organizations or individuals that are not affiliated with, directed by, or funded by any form of government. These include corporations, private financial institutions, NGOs, and paramilitary and armed resistance groups.

Non-state actors can pose significant threats to national and international security due to their potential to acquire, develop, and use chemical or biological weapons.

The growing role of non-state actors is changing the political, security, economic, and social environments.

### *What are biological weapons?*

As defined by the WHO, biological weapons can be either microorganisms like viruses, bacteria, or fungi, or toxic substances produced by living organisms that are produced and released deliberately to cause disease and death in humans, animals, or plants.

Biological weapons fall under the class of unconventional weapons or weapons of mass destruction, which also include chemical and nuclear weapons.

Biological weapons generally consist of two parts, a **weaponized agent** and a **delivery mechanism**.

### *Weaponized agents:*

- It is possible to create biological weapons utilizing almost any disease-causing agent (such as bacteria, viruses, fungus) or toxins (poisons derived from animals, plants, or microorganisms).
- Similar chemicals can also be synthesized synthetically and used for the same purposes.
- These agents are often enhanced from their natural states to make them better suited for widespread weaponized distribution.

### ***Delivery mechanism:***

- Historically, biological weapons have utilized a wide variety of delivery mechanisms.
- Missiles, bombs, hand grenades and rockets have all been used as delivery mechanisms.
- Vapors, injection systems, and other airborne systems have been developed for faster, widespread deployment.

### ***What are chemical weapons?***

A chemical weapon is any poisonous substance that, when released by a delivery mechanism like an artillery shell, rocket, or ballistic missile, has the potential to cause devastation, harm, incapacitation, and sensory discomfort. The use of chemical weapons in armed conflict is prohibited by international law since they are classed as weapons of mass destruction.

The four main categories of chemical weapons are categorized based on the way they affect the human body.

#### **Nerve agents**

Nerve agents can be breathed or absorbed via the skin and are typically thought to be the deadliest of the several types of chemical weapons. Nerve agents inhibit the body's respiratory and cardiovascular capability by causing severe damage to the central nervous system.

#### **Blister agents**

Blister agents can be liquid, gas, or aerosol-based and result in severe burns and skin blistering. Additionally, they can harm the digestive system and the respiratory system if they are swallowed or inhaled, respectively. Lewisite, Nitrogen Mustard, Sulfur Mustard, and Phosgene Oxime are examples of common blistering agents.

#### **Choking agents**

Chemical toxins known as choking agents directly affect the body's respiratory system when inhaled, leading to respiratory collapse. Choking agents that are frequently used include phosgene, chlorine, and chloropicrin.

### **Blood agents**

Blood agents interfere with the hemoglobin in the bloodstream, preventing the transport of oxygen. Blood agents are generally inhaled and then absorbed into the bloodstream. Common forms of blood agents include Hydrogen Chloride and Cyanogen Chloride.

A chemical weapon attack can be categorized into two phases, **the delivery phase** and **the dissemination phase**. The delivery phase refers to the launching of the rocket, bomb, or artillery shell. The dissemination phase involves the dispersal of the chemical agent from the weapon.

### ***Methods of dissemination:***

Chemical agents delivered through air systems can be deployed using gravity bombs, spray tanks, or rockets. Ground-detonated, and airburst gravity bombs are typically delivered by fixed-wing aircraft, while helicopters have traditionally been used to deploy spray tanks and rockets.

Ballistic missiles carrying chemical weapons use an airburst to spread chemical agents over a wide area. By utilizing submunitions, the range of the dispersed chemical agents can be increased. Compared to other delivery systems, ballistic missiles allow combatants to target a broader range of targets with chemical weapons. However, the use of explosives to distribute the chemical agents reduces the weapon's effectiveness in combat situations.

Cruise missiles, unlike ballistic missiles, can gradually and controllably disperse chemical agents without needing explosives.

**Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)** are another platform that combatants may employ to distribute chemical agents. Similar to cruise missiles, UAVs are well-suited for slower dissemination as they can control their speed and disperse chemicals over a wide area. UAVs can also operate stealthily below radar detection and change their course, enabling them to be redirected during flight.

The dissemination phase is crucial for the effectiveness of a chemical weapon, as it determines how effectively the agents are spread. Traditionally, dissemination has been achieved using explosives to release the agents sideways. Another method of dissemination involves aerodynamic dispersion, which is a non-explosive delivery mechanism that disperses the chemical agent through dispersion lines.

### **Significant Incidents Involving Non-State Actors and Chemical/Biological Weapons:**

1. **Salmonella poisoning (1984):** 751 people were intentionally infected with Salmonella, an agent that causes food poisoning, when followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh contaminated restaurant salad bars in Oregon, USA.
2. **Tokyo Subway Sarin Attack (1995):** The Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan carried out a coordinated attack using sarin nerve gas on the Tokyo subway system. The attack resulted in the deaths of 13 people and injured thousands. Aum Shinrikyo aimed to instigate chaos and initiate an apocalyptic scenario.
3. **US Anthrax attacks (2001):** Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, several letters containing anthrax spores were sent to media organizations and politicians. The attacks resulted in the deaths of five people and raised concerns about the use of biological weapons by non-state actors. The investigation into the attacks led to a scientist working for the U.S. government's biodefense program as the primary suspect.



4. **England Ricin labs (2002):** Six terrorist suspects were arrested in Manchester, England; their apartment was serving as a "ricin laboratory." British police raided two residences around London and found traces of ricin, which led to an investigation of a possible Chechen separatist plan to attack the Russian embassy with the toxin; several arrests were made.
5. **Iraq and Syria (2014-2017):** The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) reportedly used chemical weapons, including chlorine and sulfur mustard, in both Iraq and Syria during their territorial control in certain areas. These incidents included attacks on civilians and military personnel, raising concerns about the use of chemical weapons by non-state extremist groups.
6. **Salisbury Poisonings (2018):** Former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were poisoned with a Novichok nerve agent in Salisbury, UK. The incident was attributed to Russian intelligence operatives and led to a diplomatic crisis between Russia and several Western countries. A British couple was also accidentally exposed to the same nerve agent, resulting in the death of one individual.
7. **The assassination of Kim Jong-Nam (2017):** The half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un was assassinated at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia using the nerve agent VX. The attack was allegedly carried out by two women on behalf of North Korean operatives. The incident brought international attention to the use of chemical weapons in targeted assassinations.
8. **Syrian Civil War (2011-present):** Various non-state actors, including extremist groups and rebel factions, have been accused of using chemical weapons during the conflict. The most widely publicized incidents include the 2013 Ghouta attack and the 2017 Khan Shaykhun attack, both involving the use of sarin gas.

These incidents have resulted in significant casualties and have been the subject of international investigations and condemnations.

## **Treaties**

### ***1. Biological weapons treaty (1972):***

The biological weapons treaty bans:

- The development, stockpiling, acquisition, retention, and production of biological agents and toxins, weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles.
- The transfer of or assistance with acquiring the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles described above.
- The convention further requires states-parties to destroy or divert to peaceful purposes the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, and means of delivery described above within nine months of the convention's entry into force. The BWC does not ban the use of biological and toxin weapons but reaffirms the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which prohibits such use. There is also no ban on biodefense programs.

### ***Verification***

The treaty regime mandates that states-parties consult with one another and cooperate, bilaterally or multilaterally, to solve compliance concerns. It also allows states-parties to lodge a complaint with the UNSC if they believe other member states are violating the convention.

The convention has been violated in the past. The Soviet Union maintained a very large offensive biological weapons program after ratifying the BWC. Russia claims that this program has been terminated, but questions remain about what actually happened to elements of the Soviet program.

Iraq violated its commitments as a signatory state with its biological weapons program, which was uncovered by the UN Special Commission on Iraq after the Persian Gulf War.

The United States believes North Korea and China are in noncompliance with the BWC; however, they've stated that they do not have enough credible information to determine whether China complies with its obligation to eliminate its biological weapons stockpile in accordance with the BWC.

The U.S. The Compliance Report in 2021 stated that Iran's current activities continue to arouse concerns regarding its compliance with Article I of the BWC. They've stated that it is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate Iran's legal public health and biodefense research from that which is prohibited by the BWC.

## ***2. The Geneva Protocol (1925):***

The Geneva Gas Protocol, officially known as the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gasses, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, is an international treaty signed in 1925 by the majority of countries around the world. Its purpose is to prohibit the use of chemical and biological weapons during warfare. The protocol was developed during the 1925 Geneva Conference as a response to the atrocities witnessed during World War I, aiming to prevent their repetition.

The protocol was built upon previous treaties that marked the end of World War I, particularly the Treaty of Versailles (1919) between the Allies and Germany. Its main focus was on prohibiting the use of asphyxiating, poisonous, or other gasses, as well as bacteriological weapons in warfare. However, it did not ban the development, production, or stockpiling of such weapons. To address these gaps, the protocol was later complemented by the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1972 and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1993.

### ***3. Chemical weapons convention (1993):***

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a multilateral treaty that bans chemical weapons and requires their destruction within a specified period of time. The treaty is of unlimited duration and is far more comprehensive than the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which outlaws the use but not the possession of chemical weapons.

CWC negotiations started in 1980 at the UN Conference on Disarmament. The convention opened for signature on January 13, 1993, and entered into force on April 29, 1997.

The CWC is implemented by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The OPCW receives states-parties declarations detailing chemical weapons-related activities, materials, and relevant industrial activities. After receiving declarations, the OPCW inspects and monitors states-parties' facilities and activities that are relevant to the convention to ensure compliance.

Israel has signed but has yet to ratify the convention. Three states have neither signed nor ratified the convention (Egypt, North Korea, and South Sudan). The CWC requires states-parties to declare chemical industry facilities that produce or use chemicals of concern to the convention. These chemicals are grouped into schedules based on the risk they pose to the convention. A facility producing a Schedule 1 chemical is considered a Schedule 1 facility.

- **Schedule 1:** chemicals and precursors pose a high risk to the convention and are rarely used for peaceful purposes. States-parties may not retain these chemicals except in small quantities for research, medical, pharmaceutical, or defensive use. Many Schedule 1 chemicals have been stockpiled as chemical weapons.
- **Schedule 2:** chemicals are toxic chemicals that pose a significant threat to the convention and are precursors to the production of Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 chemicals. These chemicals are not produced in large quantities for commercial or other peaceful purposes.

- **Schedule 3:** chemicals are usually produced in large quantities for purposes not prohibited by the CWC but still pose a risk to the convention. Some of these chemicals have been stockpiled as chemical weapons.

***Prohibitions:***

The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits:

- Developing, producing, acquiring, stockpiling, or retaining chemical weapons.
- The direct or indirect transfer of chemical weapons.
- Chemical weapons use or military preparation for use.
- Assisting, encouraging, or inducing other states to engage in CWC-prohibited activity.
- The use of riot control agents “as a method of warfare.”

***Declaration Requirements:***

The CWC requires states-parties to declare in writing to the OPCW their chemical weapons stockpiles, chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs), relevant chemical industry facilities, and other weapons-related information. This must be done within 30 days of the convention's entry into force for each member state.

**Chemical Weapons Stockpiles**—States-parties must declare all chemical weapons stockpiles, which are broken down into three categories:

- **Category 1:** chemical weapons based on Schedule 1 chemicals, including VX and sarin.
- **Category 2:** chemical weapons based on non-Schedule 1 chemicals, such as phosgene.
- **Category 3:** chemical weapons, including unfilled munitions, devices, and equipment designed specifically to employ chemical weapons.

Other weapons-related declarations states-parties must make include:

- Chemical weapons production facilities on their territories since January 1, 1946.
- Facilities (such as laboratories and test sites) designed, constructed, or used primarily for chemical weapons development since January 1, 1946.
- Old chemical weapons on their territories (chemical weapons manufactured before 1925 or those produced between 1925 and 1946 that have deteriorated to such an extent that they are no longer usable).
- Abandoned chemical weapons (abandoned by another state without consent on or after January 1, 1925).
- Plans for destroying weapons and facilities.
- All transfers or receipts of chemical weapons or chemical weapons-production equipment since January 1, 1946.
- All riot control agents are in their possession.

### **Questions A Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)**

1. How can you ensure transparency and trust amongst nations regarding bio and chem weapons?
2. What measures need to be enforced to ensure all member states abide by the clauses of the BWC and CWC?
3. Mechanism to identify the role of non-state actors in the regulation of these weapons?
4. What measures, if any, should be put in place in the event an intentional or accidental bio/chem attack impacts another nation?
5. Regulation of “riot control agents” and those that can also be used in bioterrorism?

## **Sources**

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